



Internship During a Pandemic

2020-2021 Social Justice Internship: Blake Everson

Introduction

The Loyola Chicago Social Justice Internship is a program that allows students to have an opportunity to engage with the community and work with a non-profit. The program requires 250-275 hours over a course of a year with a class that guides students through understanding social justice, non-profit leadership, intersectionality, community development, and Ignatian values.

Being 1 of 13, has been a learning a unique experience full of learning and engaging with diverse peers. Based on my application and interview I was placed with Catholic Charities in the Volunteer Relations department.

My Role

Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Chicago is a Non-Profit in which their mission states, "mission of charity to anyone in need by providing compassionate, competent and professional services that strengthen and support individuals, families and communities based on the value and dignity of human life."

As an intern for the Volunteer Relations I was involved with Celebration of Giving, and Saint Sabina Food Pantry Delivery programs. I assisted in various forms of outreach directly with calling clients or using graphic design skills for emailing donors.



Celebration
of Giving



Effects of a Pandemic

Like most aspects of life in 2020, my internship with Catholic Charities was affected. There was a hope to have more engagement directly with clients/volunteers/staff to build relations and learn from others. The pandemic caused a disruption in that not all aspects of the internship came to fruition and was a challenge that presented concerns of learning to adapt. The virtual world when it comes to volunteering and donor outreach is not always ideal but learning how to overcome and creative solutions can make the challenge less of a set back. In a virtual and telework internship I learned the significance of communication and community support when confronting challenges of adapting to virtual and remote setting.



Acknowledgements

A year that has many unprecedented events that caused disruptions to multiple aspects of life, there is a need for a special thank you dedication. Many thanks to Andrew Miller for the guidance and mentorship to my peers and myself. Secondly, a thank you to Andrew McKernin and Noreen Russo at Catholic Charities for the experience and being understanding of circumstances.

Experiences

Despite challenges presented by the global pandemic, I still gained some valuable experiences. In helping with details of Celebration of Giving, I was able to understand how complex it can be to help a community with a simple concept of providing gifts and things need for children around the holidays. There are the aspects of including assets of social workers, the combination of institutions/businesses, individuals, and groups/associations donate their time and resources to make a holiday a positive experience for the Chicago community. I was tasked with designing email flyers to get donations or volunteers. I learned it is important to be clear in email formats of communication with the public.

When working on the Saint Sabina Food Pantry Delivery program I was tasked with calling the clients that were predominately elderly and in need of a safe alternative to getting food from the pantry. The elderly community of Chicago was a population I had not yet worked with and was rewarding experience. It was a valuable experience in that people were happy to have someone reaching out to them about having a service for delivery and just getting to talk to someone. The elderly have been a vulnerable population during the pandemic and communicating with them through the phone demonstrated how important community assets are to certain demographics.

Overall, my experience with Catholic Charities was limited by a pandemic but the tasks were significant to the Chicago community and to my own self growth. There is an element of small things make for the biggest changes and my time with Catholic Charities has been eye opening to making the small things count. As being an overachieving perfectionist I learned how to be patient and take a step back to realize the positive small impacts I have had.